

MARYLAND ZOO

NEWS

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PRAIRIE DOG PUPS POP UP AT THE MARYLAND ZOO JUST IN TIME FOR MOTHER'S DAY

BALTIMORE, MD –New babies are emerging in Prairie Dog Town, the Maryland Zoo's busy prairie dog colony. Tiny black-tailed prairie dog pups (*Cynomys ludovicianus*) began popping up this week and can be seen exploring the habitat above their underground tunnels!

Black-tailed prairie dogs are native to the western United States. Female prairie dogs have litters of three-to-four pups each spring. The spunky, small rodents spend much of their time burrowing complex tunnel systems underground. The pups are born underground in a nesting chamber and may spend up to seven weeks underground to nurse. The pups are born blind and without hair, leaving them helpless and completely reliant on their parents to ensure their survival. Both parents care for the pups, however once they emerge from the burrows, they may nurse from any other female prairie dog.

In the 1970s, prairie dogs were critically endangered. Due to conservation efforts, they are now considered a "species of least concern." However, they continue to face rapid habitat loss due to urban development, and declining population numbers due to eradication efforts by ranchers, and disease.

Prairie Dog Town opened at The Maryland Zoo in 2009, when the colony was moved from their habitat in the Main Valley to the front of the Zoo. For photos and updates on the prairie dog colony, please visit www.marylandzoo.org and www.facebook.com/marylandzoo.

About The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore

Founded in 1876, The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore is the third oldest zoo in the United States and is internationally known for its contributions in conservation and research. More than 1,500 animals are represented in the Zoo's varied natural habitats such as the award-winning Penguin Coast, Polar Bear Watch, Maryland Wilderness, and African Journey. Situated in Druid Hill Park near downtown Baltimore, the Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. For more information, visit www.marylandzoo.org.

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